

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 10914 01 OF 02 231938Z

64

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01 /120 W

----- 040305

R 231754Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3328

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USCINCEUR

DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PUBLIC ORDER

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED - MIDSUMMER MUSING ABOUT THE
POSSIBILITIES OF BRITAIN'S ECONOMY AND SOCIETY COLLAPSING
OR A MILITARY COUP, AND ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF RIGHT-WING
GROUPS PREPARING FOR SUCH CONTINGENCIES INTENSIFIED
AUGUST 22 WHEN THE GUARDIAN AND DAILY EXPRESS REVEALED
THE EXISTENCE AND PLANS OF AN ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS
"GREAT BRITAIN 75" (GB75). DESCRIBED BY DAILY EXPRESS
JOURNALIST CHAPMAN PINCHER, AN ACCOMPLISHED PURVEYOR OF
THE SENSATIONAL, AS A "POWERFUL, NEW, ANTI-CHAOS ORGANI-
ZATION" AND BY THE GUARDIAN AS "A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION
TO TAKE OVER FACTORIES, POWER STATIONS AND ESSENTIAL
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PAGE 02 LONDON 10914 01 OF 02 231938Z

SERVICES IN THE EVENT OF A GENERAL STRIKE", THESE RE-

PORTS TRIGGERED A WAVE OF PRESS COMMENTARY AND PROVIDED NEW GRIST FOR THE POLITICAL MILL WHICH IS WARMING UP FOR THE ANTICIPATED GENERAL ELECTION.

2. GB75 IS LED BY COLONEL DAVID STIRLING AND REPORTEDLY HAS NO CONNECTION WITH "UNISON", A SIMILAR MOVEMENT HEADED BY RETIRED GENERAL SIR WALTER WALKER. THE SERVICES OF GB75 WOULD REPORTEDLY BE AVAILABLE TO WHATEVER GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE IN POWER DURING A PERIOD OF SERIOUS CIVIL DISORDER. IT IS ALLEGEDLY COMPOSED OF ENGINEERS, TECHNICIANS AND OTHERS HAVING THE SPECIAL SKILLS NEEDED TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES. STIRLING, WHO FOUNDED AND SERVED IN THE SPECIAL AIR SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II, HAS A REPUTATION FOR INVOLVEMENT IN RIGHTIST CAUSES, INCLUDING RECRUITMENT FOR AFRICAN REGIMES. ALTHOUGH HE CLAIMS GB75 IS NON-POLITICAL AND OPPOSES EXTREMISTS OF BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT, PRESS REPORTS OF ITS DOCUMENTS REVEAL HOSTILITY TOWARD TRADE UNIONISM AND INCLUDE ALLEGATIONS THAT SOME LABOR MPS ARE IN COLLUSION WITH TRADE UNION EXTREMISTS. (A SMALL, LEFT-WING PACIFIST PUBLICATION, "PEACE NEWS", HAS PRINTED GB75 DOCUMENTS WHICH DESCRIBE MORE FULLY ITS ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSES. A COPY OF THE "PEACE NEWS" PAMPHLET WILL BE POUCHED.) STIRLING HAS NOT IDENTIFIED HIS FINANCIAL BACKERS, BUT THE AUGUST 23 GUARDIAN REPORTS THAT GEOFFREY EDWARDS, A RETIRED MILLIONAIRE ARMS DEALER, ADMITTED BACKING GB75, BUT DENIES HAVING YET MADE ANY FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO IT.

3. THE LABOR PARTY APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO GET SOME POLITICAL MILEAGE FROM THE EXISTENCE OF GB75 AND SIMILAR GROUPS. MINISTER OF DEFENSE ROY MASON, IN A SCATHING AND OVERTLY POLITICAL STATEMENT ISSUED AUGUST 22 BY THE LABOR PARTY, CHARGED THAT WALKER AND STIRLING WERE FRUSTRATED CONSERVATIVES ENGAGING IN A FASCIST-LIKE ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT BRITISH DEMOCRACY, AND THAT THEIR ACTIVITIES WERE THE RESULT OF "THE COMPLETE AND ABYSMAL FAILURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND ITS LEADERSHIP." HE ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER CONSERVATIVE LEADER HEATH'S FAILURE TO

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PAGE 03 LONDON 10914 01 OF 02 231938Z

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PAGE 01 LONDON 10914 02 OF 02 231851Z

64

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01 /120 W

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SPEAK OUT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS APPROVAL OF SUCH ORGANIZATIONS. MASON'S BLAST WAS PRECEDED BY A STATEMENT FROM LABOR PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY RON HAYWARD WHICH LASHED OUT AT THESE ORGANIZATIONS AND CLAIMED THAT THE LABOR PARTY IS THE "BULWARK AND SHIELD...AGAINST TOTALITARIANISM." THUS FAR THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE NOT ADDRESSED THE ISSUE BUT THEY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE TO TAKE A POSITION. END UNCLASSIFIED

4. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION ABOUT THE POSSIBLE COLLAPSE OF BRITISH SOCIETY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF RAMPANT INFLATION AND ATTENDANT PROBLEMS. CONSIDERABLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 10914 02 OF 02 231851Z

ATTENTION, CERTAINLY MORE THAN WOULD SEEM MERITED, HAS BEEN PAID TO THE FORMATION OF "PRIVATE ARMIES", SUCH AS

GB75 AND "UNISON", AND THE SPECTRE OF A MILITARY COUP HAS BEEN RAISED. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THESE GROUPS ARE MANIFESTATIONS OF PROFOUND CONCERN AMONG SOME SEGMENTS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS OVER THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY TRADE UNION INFLUENCE AND THE POTENTIALLY RUINOUS INFLATION, AND THE GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT INABILITY TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. HOWEVER, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT GROUPS SUCH AS GB75 AND "UNISON" COMMAND ANY MASS APPEAL OR THAT THEY MAY BE RECEIVING ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. WHILE IT IS NOW ALMOST UNAVOIDABLE THAT PRIVATE ACTION GROUPS WILL BE HOTLY DEBATED IN A GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE POLITICAL VALUE OF THIS ISSUE IS QUESTIONABLE. FINALLY, DESPITE ACUTE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND PERSISTENT CLASS DIVISIONS, THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF BRITAIN IS, BY ANY OBJECTIVE STANDARD, FAR FROM UNRAVELLING. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, ECONOMIC STABILITY, PRESS COMMENTS, LABOR UNIONS, LABOR STRIKES, CONTINGENCY PLANNING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON10914
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740233-0910
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740823/aaaaatgw.tel
Line Count: 187
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 APR 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <26 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE PUBLIC ORDER
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005